

Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences – Generic View and a Concrete Example

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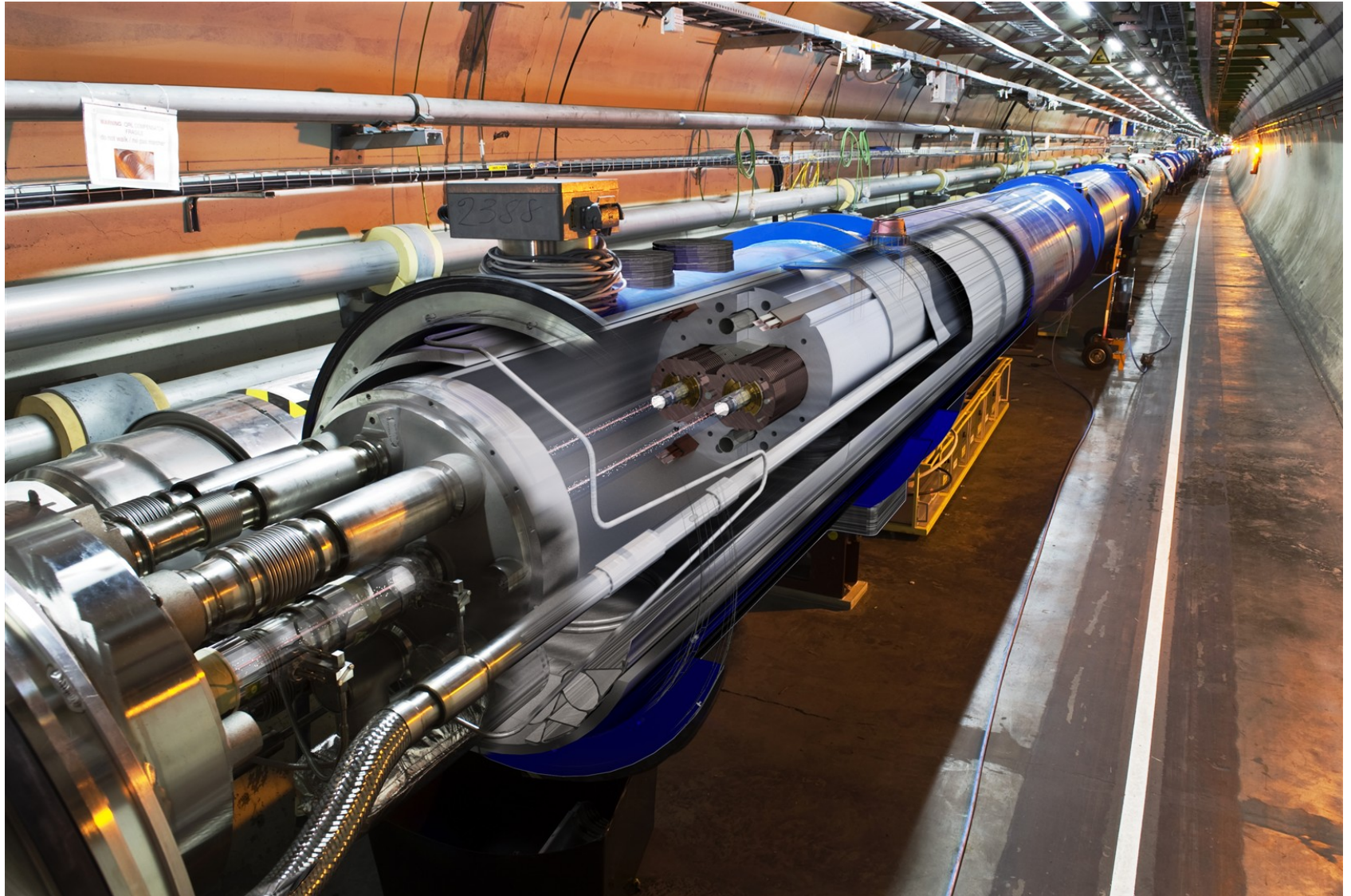
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Content

- The Many Faces of Research Infrastructures
- Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences I:
Definition, Key Features, Main Components
- Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences II:
Challenges, Impact, Outlook
- FORS for Example:
Mission, Activities, Resources, Strategic Perspectives

The Many Faces of Research Infrastructures













Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences: **Definition**

Research infrastructures in the social sciences are:

- durable **institutions**, technical **tools** and platforms, and/or **services** that are put into place for **supporting** and enhancing research as **public good resources** for the social science community.

The term “institution” refers to physical or virtual locations, organisations, or networks.

Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences: **Key Features**

Research infrastructures in the social sciences ...

- ... offer user-oriented services
- ... adapt to changing needs of users
- ... promote progress in methodology
- ... need to be durable and stable

Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences: **Main Components**

- **Data services:** documenting, preserving, and disseminating data: e.g., CESSDA
- **Collection and harmonization platforms:** providing and linking data: e.g., LIS, ESS
- Advancement in empirical **methodology:** e.g., mixed mode interviewing, DDI
- **Education** and training: e.g., QMSS

Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences: **Impact**

- Internationalisation – scaling up the social sciences
- Combination of data and methods
- Open science

Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences: **Challenges**

- Continuity and innovation
- Open data access and confidentiality
- Fragmentation, funding, and time frames

Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences: **Outlook**

- Integration into researchers' daily work
- Coordination at national and international levels
- Long-term durability

Learn more about research infrastructures in the social sciences:

This volume brings social science research infrastructures to the foreground and provides a conceptual framework for understanding them. Key common denominators are that they provide public good resources for research, and that they are established to support research for the long-term. Research infrastructures are embedded in research practices and communities, at national and international levels. They enhance the efficiency of the research process as well as fundamental aspects of the scientific method, for example, comparability, replication, and diffusion of knowledge and information.

The contributions within this book demonstrate that research infrastructures are triggering a major paradigm shift in the social sciences, with profound effects on the nature of knowledge production within and across disciplines. Indeed, they are in large part responsible for an invisible revolution that is affecting research and researchers in fundamental ways. The focus of this book is on charting and clarifying their functions and their impact with the goal of improving our understanding of their underlying mechanisms, their challenges, and their immense potential for advancing science.

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Peter Farago, Director of the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences FORS, and Professor at the University of Lausanne.

Dominique Joye, Professor at the University of Lausanne and senior advisor to FORS.



Kleiner | Renschler | Wernli | Farago | Joye | **Understanding Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences**



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Understanding Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences



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FORS



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Unil

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Our Mission

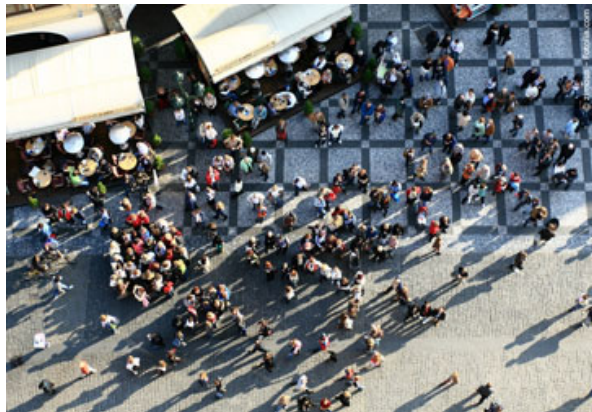
- At the service of the social science research community in Switzerland and abroad
- National centre of competence aspiring to the highest professional standards
- Well integrated in relevant national and international networks
- Key activities: data production, data archiving, data access, methodological consulting and research



Short History

- Re-combination and further development of **three existing institutions**: SIDOS (data archive), Swiss Household Panel, SELECTS (electoral studies)
- Integration of international surveys, the Social Report, and **new tasks** (access to national statistical data)
- Development of scientific and organisational **synergies**

Activities



- **Monitoring social and political change**
 - Swiss Household Panel
 - International surveys on attitudes, opinions and values: ISSP, ESS, EVS, *SHARE*
 - Election study SELECTS
 - Social Report
 - LIS Cross-national Data Center in Lux.
- **Services and consultation**
 - Data archives
 - Inventory of research projects
 - Access to national statistical microdata
- **Research on methodological and substantive topics**
- **Research and teaching cooperation with universities**
 - Swiss Summer School, Lugano

Guaranteeing Scientific Quality

The Scientific Advisory Board...

- is composed of eminent Swiss and international scholars
- controls the scientific quality of the performance of FORS
- strengthens networking with the Swiss and the international scientific communities

Institutional Setting

Foundation Board:

- University of Lausanne
- Three other universities
- Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences
- Swiss Federal Statistical Office

Resources

- 35 permanent staff,
30 with university degree in social sciences,
16 with Dr./PhD
- Annual budget of 7-8 million Swiss francs

Strategic Perspectives

- Scientific cooperation with Swiss universities in FORS's key areas of expertise: e.g., life cycle, elections, poverty and precariousness, political behaviour, methodology
- Promotion of secondary analysis of social scientific data
- Active collaboration in the development and implementation of national and international data policies
- International collaboration to develop the network of social science data archives

Learn more about FORS:

www.forscenter.ch

**Thank you for your
attention !**

